794 or Koma/," Outremer, 1929; H. Labouret, Les Manding et leur langue.

794 The Komo
561 society, komo tyew (literally, men, people of the Komo) is composed of all circumcised men, with the exception of the griot who may under no condition become members, after an initiation performed according to the age grade, the members of which are called tonyaw. The hierarchy is rigorously respected: an earlier age grade will always be ahead of the one that follows it in all circumstances of secular or religious life. The Komo recognizes a chief, komotigi (literally, master or owner of the Komo) who preferably belongs to the caste of blacksmiths and whose function is hereditary. The son automatically assumes command of the age grade which follows that of his father. Upon the latter's death, he changes his age grade and becomes the head of his father's. In the case where the owner of the Komo dies
[304] young and his eldest son, who is to inherit the office, is not yet circumcised, he is made to undergo the operation in the night following the death, and on the following day is proclaimed chief (1).

1. In La Religion Bambara, L. Tauxier points out that in some villages the chief of the Komo exercises his power only during a seven-year term. At the end of seven years an election takes place and the function is not hereditary.

794 Because of the importance of his functions, the chief of the Komo
784 is made to respect a great number of taboos. In particular he may not penetrate into the sanctuary if he has not been chaste during the past twenty-four hours. If the taboo is broken, he must warn the men of his age grade and sacrifice two roosters upon the altars to purify himself. His wife is initiated (for she is apt to see certain ritual
[562] objects generally hidden from women because of her intimacy with the chief), but she is not present at any of the ceremonies to which only the members are /144/ admitted. If she commits adultery she
[837] brings about her husband's exclusion from the society, not only as chief but also as member.

794 The chief is often assisted by two elders belonging to his age grade,
561 whose advice he seeks in all cases concerning the community. In addition, he is always helped by young initiates. If one of these

562 581 595 Between the omnipotence of the first and the humble lot of the second there is every possible gradation. This is all the more true in that, thanks to polygamy, lawful households may be found in association with the free unions and concubinage desired by the husband, in such a way that the position of each person in the family, already affected by all these contingencies, is, in the last analysis, dominated by the absolute authority of the fa. We shall see this clearly in connection with filiation, and it is no less apparent regarding wives, except for those already described who have sufficient influence and the means to live virtually independent of the rest of the family. Although in fact a wife who was not paid for has no regular position and her children legally do not belong to either of their parents, although a concubine does not even count as a person, according to custom, and her children are their genitor's slaves, merely by the will of the fa either of them may have an enviable pre-eminence in the family, especially envied by the lawful wives.

593 562 Under these circumstances, it may be admitted that conjugal duties, obedience, fidelity, and their counterparts, the rights to help and assistance, have nuances that vary from one situation to another. It is true that a wife must obey her husband and that he is allowed to resort to [208] corporal punishment to control her, which he does not fail to use. She is not completely at his mercy, however. For instance, he can require her to live in a given place; nevertheless, if it has been agreed that she is not to leave the tribal territory, and this usually tacitly understood, he may not take her away. He can force her to do household chores, but if she is free, he cannot require her to do servile tasks. In the same way, he cannot rent out her services, put her up as security, or sell her.

837 The duty of reciprocal fidelity is most often very vague. Admittedly, this is not expected of the husband, and indeed, the wife often encourages his lapses from virtue on the theory that this indulgence will attach him to her. As far as a wife's misbehavior is concerned, a husband does not always give it much importance and is sometimes not at all averse to profiting from it. If children result from her indiscretions, he is not distressed in the least about accepting or denying them.

[848]

688 Tjoïna, or Kégné, and the Nama of Misango, Kokodjan, or Guendo. The Djara of Tjikoumela is very popular in Bani country. A perjured Negro offers a gnénama fani, and the fani-n-kolo is costly. For the Komo it consists of two red roosters, two goats, a dog, two red kola nuts, a basket of millet (between 18 and 20 kilograms) and three times 8 kémé (the kémé is worth 80 cowrie shells) if the culprit is a man, or four times 8 kémé if it is a woman. For the Nama the price includes a gourd of honey, two gourds of karité butter, a red hen, two red kola nuts, a basket of millet, and 8 ba (the ba is worth 800 cowrie shells, or one franc), a kémé, and a débé (120 cowrie shells). In addition these are one to two kilograms of salt and a gourd of gnama-n-kou (malagueta pepper: amomum melegueta) for the sacrificer. For the Nia the cost is 12 ba, four chickens, two dogs, and two hens.

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[804 436]

684 837 Adultery is frequent; it occurs daily and is the source of most of the disputes that arise. Some husbands are tolerant, however, and many are satisfied with 2 to 3 ba (between 1, 600 and 2, 400 cowrie shells, or 2 to 3 francs) and victims for a sacrifice to the family boli, such as a hen, a dog, a kid, or two kola nuts.

684 836 Like adultery, fornication is a serious offence because it violates the rights of third parties. It is less serious /163/ than adultery,

626 Every seducer who has paid the fine demanded by the fiancé can walk with head held high, for he has satisfied justice, cleansed his honor, and his shield is unstained. But let him not be careless enough to go to the village of the injured fiancé, for he will be /164/ beaten hard by the young people; his exclusion often lasts for years.

010 Now, there is no reason to be surprised at the Bambara attitude toward adultery and fornication. If it can all be reduced to a violated principle of justice and nothing more, that is because they have fallen so low that they believe they were created and put in the world by God in order to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh as much as possible.

Abortion

562 Monsieur Louis Barbier wrote in the "Quinzaine" (January 16, 1906) /"Étude sur les populations Bambaras de la Vallée du Niger (A Study of the Bambara Peoples of the Niger Valley)"/: "The Bambara woman is a machine to produce children and do heavy work." In this statement he expresses, I am sure, the belief of all Europeans who have stayed among the Negroes without mingling with them or living their life. If the Bambara woman "is a machine to produce children," [563] it is a slow machine. I know families where there are seven and eight children by the same wife, but that is unusual; the average remains two or three children per woman.

853 837 It is not through frequent childbearing or because they are prolific that Bambara women lose their charms and wither. They do not, and cannot, conceive but every two or three years; they cannot bear a child more than once every three or four years, since every mother nurses her child for at least two whole years, and quite often three, and during all that time she may not conceive. Does she remain continent during that time? What is to be thought of these utterances on the part of a husband:

A ye den soro a ti son toun.
She has had a child, she wants no more relations with me.
Né t'a don toun, ne tigouéré a la toun.
I do not know her any more, I no longer go near her.

•837 Such statements simply mean that there is cheating (1) on both

[833 836]

1. Onanism is very common. Married men tell you openly: "We cannot have too many children, our wives have to go to the markets, and a pregnant woman cannot do this; an b'an dabali ("we manage to avoid having children"). There are few unmarried mothers, and yet the marriage of a virgin is unusual. They have little recourse to abortion, so there is onanism on their part. "Ka bogotigi soro min te djakouma koun don i na yala, to find a young girl who has not fornicated, you will take a walk." It is true that their lovers are often children, who cannot make them mothers.

sides, for all precautions are taken to see that the /165/ mother's breasts do not dry up to avoid the possibility of her conceiving. The soungourou, the widows and divorcées, "real cradle vultures," know how much these precautions weary a young husband, and they come running in large numbers, without shame or modesty.

And while the husband absents himself from his wife for fuller enjoyment, she on her part proves easy with the men friends who visit her or whom she visits, friends who give her the desired enjoyment without ever compromising her. I would go so far as to say that she is glad to find herself deserted, for she might conceive with her husband and then it would be difficult to resort to abortion, while with her friends there is greater freedom.

[847]

And if she conceives, a pretext is quickly found for her to go to her mother or whoever takes her place. Three fourths of the old women are past masters in abortions. Camphor in large doses is the basis of their brews, and they know how to use gold chloride for a modest fee; they know how to serve each and every one and safeguard their honor.

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